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Item 7 (a) of the provisional agenda
Reports on the work of the Conference of European Statisticians, its Bureau and Teams of Specialists

Implementation of the UNECE Statistical Programme 2014

Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

Report of the 2014 October meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians

Summary

The present report is submitted in compliance with the Rules Governing the Work of the Conference and its Bureau (ECE/CES/2007/8), adopted by the Conference of European Statisticians at its fifty-third plenary session. Referring to the Rules, the Bureau acts as a steering body of the Conference. The report includes decisions taken by the Bureau at its 21-22 October 2014 meeting on the work carried out under the auspices of the Conference.

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I. Introduction

1. The meeting of the CES Bureau was held in Geneva on 21-22 October 2014. The following members of the Bureau attended: Mr. W. Smith (Chairman), Mr. K. Pesendorfer (Austria), Mr. T. Koskimäki (representing Ms. Marjo Bruun, Finland), Mr. A.M. Ortega (representing Mr. Eduardo Sojo Garza-Aldape, Mexico), Mr. B. Aydemir (Turkey), and Mr. G. Watson (representing Mr. John Pullinger, United Kingdom). The following permanent observers also attended: Mr. V. Sokolin (CIS-STAT), Ms. M. Kotzeva (representing Mr. W. Radermacher, Eurostat), Mr. L. M. Ducharme (IMF), Ms. M. Durand (OECD), and Ms. L. Bratanova (UNECE).

2. The following persons attended at the invitation of the Chair of the Bureau: Mr. C. Bach (Executive Secretary of UNECE) for agenda item 4; Mr. G-S. Ulrich and Mr. B. Rothen (Switzerland) for agenda item 9 (a), Ms. M. Wahlström (UNISDR) for agenda item 2 (b) and Mr. R. Crotti (World Economic Forum) for agenda item 10.

3. The following persons assisted the members of the Bureau: Mr. S. Dufour (Canada), Mr. A. Kosarev (CIS-STAT), Ms. S. Onur (Turkey) and Ms. C. Sa (Eurostat). Ms. T. Luige of UNECE served as Secretary of the meeting.

4. The following staff of the UNECE Statistical Division also attended: Mr. C. Boldsen, Mr. A. Vikat, Mr. M. Nagy, Mr. S. Vale, Ms. A. Peltola, Mr. P. Valente and Ms. V. Etropolska.

II. In-depth reviews of selected statistical areas

1. Demographic projections

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/2 by Canada and the United Kingdom, 2/Add.1 by UNECE, 2/Add.2 by Turkey

5. The Bureau conducted an in-depth review of population projections based on a paper by Canada and the United Kingdom and notes by UNECE and Turkey. The following issues were discussed:

(a) Various national and international institutions produce an increasing number of population projections. These often lead to different results depending on the methodology and assumptions used, especially concerning migration;

(b) Communication with policymakers, media and other users of population projections is very important. When releasing demographic projections, clear information should be included about the methodology, assumptions and scenarios, and how the results can be used;

(c) A collection of good practices on communicating population projections to users, including communicating uncertainty, would be useful, as there is limited material available in this area;

(d) It was proposed the Secretariat set up a database with metadata about national and international population projections. OECD is willing to share its information on population projections for this purpose;

(e) Eurostat confirmed its support to the regular joint Eurostat-UNECE expert meetings on demographic projections. The meetings provide a forum to discuss the related technical issues but also to connect producers and users of demographic projections.

Conclusions

6. The Bureau decided to set up a task force on population projections to carry out the following tasks: (i) Prepare a collection of good practices on communicating population projections to users; (ii) Provide guidance on the establishment of a UNECE database of metadata about national and international population projections. The following countries and organizations expressed interest in participating in the task force: Canada, Mexico, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom and Eurostat.

7. The Secretariat will draft the terms of reference for the task force to be discussed by the Bureau at its February 2015 meeting.

2. Measuring extreme events and disasters

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/3 by Mexico, 3/Add.1 by UNECE, 3/Add.2 by Turkey

8. The Bureau conducted an in-depth review of measuring extreme events and disasters based on a paper by Mexico, and notes by UNECE and Turkey. The following issues were discussed:

(a) NSOs possess data that can be used for disaster relief, preparedness and risk reduction. When extreme events and disasters occur, there is an urgent demand for real-time data on population, businesses and infrastructure in the concerned area. Historical data are needed for risk-management, early warning systems and assessing the impact of disasters;

(b) Clarification of the role of NSOs in providing information on disasters and extreme events is important. One example of the issues to be considered is how to deal with statistical confidentiality when detailed information is needed for disaster relief;

(c) Statistical information has to be combined with geographical information. Institutional cooperation between the NSOs and mapping agencies is needed for this purpose;

(d) There are strong similarities between the work on this topic and the work on climate change related statistics: first, it is important to define the role of official statistics in this area, then look at what official statistics can contribute, what users need, which statistics are readily available and which should be developed in future. It is crucial to establish collaboration with partner organizations involved in this area;

(e) One of the first tasks would be to agree on common classifications and definitions on disasters and extreme events for statistical purposes. The Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES) was mentioned as an important reference document, providing a typology of disasters;

(f) Several UN agencies are dealing with this topic and better coordination is needed;

(g) ESCAP has initiated a programme for the development of natural disaster statistics in Asia and the Pacific. A meeting of the expert group on this topic took place on 27-29 October 2014 in Sendai, Japan;

(h) The 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction will be held on 14-18 March 2015 in Sendai, Japan. One of the sessions will be on data gaps. Participation of statisticians to help clarify concepts and terminology will be important.

Conclusions

9. The Secretariat, in consultation with Mexico, Eurostat, OECD and UNISDR, will develop terms of reference for a group to deal with statistics on extreme events and disasters, and explore countries' interest in participating in the work. The group should consider the role of official statistics in this area and develop a work plan.

10. UNISDR will make a recommendation to countries to involve NSOs in the national delegations who will participate in the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Japan in 2015.

III. CES Members' Guidebook

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/4 by Canada

11. The Bureau discussed a draft *CES Members' Guidebook*. The Guidebook provides information on CES and its Bureau: their role, history, working procedures, outputs and on the ways they support international statistical development in the UNECE region and beyond. The following issues were discussed:

(a) The Guidebook will be very useful for all CES and Bureau members;

(b) The Guidebook could explain more explicitly the relation of UNECE and CES to the broader UN system;

(c) The key achievements of CES over the last years could be highlighted even more in the Guidebook for the reader to better understand the overall value of CES.

Conclusions

12. The Bureau welcomed the *CES Members' Guidebook* and thanked Canada for the initiative to prepare it. The Bureau asked the Secretariat to finalise the Guidebook in light of the discussion at the Bureau meeting and make it available for all CES members and stakeholders.

IV. Meeting with the Executive Secretary of UNECE

13. The Bureau met with the UNECE Executive Secretary, Mr. Christian Bach. The Executive Secretary underlined that statistics is a priority working area of UNECE considering the increasing demands for timely and reliable information for monitoring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He also referred to other important global conferences that increase the demand for statistics and statistical capacities: the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (Sendai, Japan, March 2015) and the United Nations Climate Change Conference (Paris, 2015).

14. Mr. Bach emphasised that CES has a crucial role in engaging its members in responding to these huge measurement challenges. In addition to monitoring the achievement of policy goals, statistics can be used for empowering people and mobilising action to achieving change. The Executive Secretary urged statisticians to challenge themselves to rethink how official statistics are produced. Particular attention should be paid to significantly improving the timeliness of data. Mr. Bach also underlined that CES can be at the forefront of exploring how to use new data sources, build partnerships in providing data for SDGs, and find new ways to promote the use of statistics.

V. Discussion on Data Revolution

15. The Bureau discussed the work of the Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development (IEAG), established by the United Nations Secretary-General on 29 August 2014. The Group will provide input to the Secretary-General's Synthesis Report on measures required to close the data gaps and strengthen national statistical capacities in view of the post-2015 development agenda. There are five statisticians in the Group which has 25 members.

16. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) CES has an active work agenda on issues related to data revolution and the use of new data sources for official statistics, including Big Data;

(b) NSOs should be at the core of monitoring SDGs, coordinating the work and ensuring quality control of data and metadata. It will be crucial to create mechanisms that support close collaboration among the SDG data producers, including those outside the statistical system;

(c) Providing data for SDGs will require a massive investment in statistical systems, even in developed countries. The existing statistical capacity will not allow to achieve the expected data quality and coverage for the 169 SDG targets and an even higher number of indicators. Qualitatively new solutions are needed. Data revolution can be a way forward, especially in developing countries;

(d) Statistical capacity building will have an important role. This is reflected in Goal 17 related to means of implementation;

(e) The statistical community has a long history of dealing with trade-off between timeliness, quality and cost. Official statisticians can use their core competencies in looking for ways to considerably improve timeliness while respecting the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;

(f) National statistical offices could provide quality assessment of SDG data, including for data created outside official statistics. However, this would require additional resources;

(g) Full transparency and openness about methodology of data production should be required from all SDG data producers. Some private producers may be reluctant to provide information on the methods used. The question is how to ensure that private data producers comply with the quality requirements, including the principle of confidentiality and the right to privacy;

(h) There have been discussions about introducing an international Watchdog to monitor data quality;

(i) Public-private partnerships may allow statisticians new ways to provide society with high quality data. Examples of good practices and results achieved through public-private partnerships should be shared among statistical offices;

(j) Improved collaboration among international organizations is crucial for SDG monitoring. International organizations should bring statistical experts together to agree on practical ways forward in SDG monitoring and reporting. This can be done at a regional level and in collaboration with geospatial and research communities.

Conclusions

17. The Bureau will discuss the implications of the report on *Mobilising the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development* (www.undatarevolution.org) at its meeting in February 2015.

VI. UNECE Statistical Programme for 2015

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/5 by UNECE

18. The Bureau discussed the draft UNECE Statistical Programme for 2015 and the various Steering Groups and Task Forces that are related to the activities. The terms of reference of currently active Teams of Specialists are available at www.unece.org/stats/ToS.html.

19. The CIS-Stat emphasised the importance of coordinating the capacity building events in the CIS countries and asked the Bureau to discuss coordination of capacity building activities at a future meeting.

Conclusions

20. The Bureau approved the Statistical Programme for 2015 subject to the suggestions made in the discussion on individual items below.

1. Ageing-related statistics

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/6 by the Task Force

21. The Bureau reviewed the progress report of the Task Force on Ageing-related Statistics and discussed further work. The following issues were discussed:

(a) Eurostat supports this work in view of the high policy importance of ageing in EU. Closer cooperation with Eurostat can reduce reporting burden on countries and ensure consistency of responses from EU-wide surveys;

(b) Achieving good quality of indicators is challenging. This issue should be considered in the upcoming meeting of the Task Force;

(c) While supporting the modern way of working via websites and teleconferences, face-to-face meetings remain important for the Task Force's success.

Conclusions

22. The Bureau supported the on-going work of the Task Force on Ageing-related Statistics.

2. Time-use surveys

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/7 by UNECE

23. The Bureau discussed follow-up work on time-use surveys after the endorsement of the *Guidelines for harmonizing time-use surveys* and reviewed the terms of reference for a Task Force on valuing unpaid household service work. The following issues were discussed:

(a) The Guidelines are valuable as time-use surveys are very important for analysing gender issues and are the only source for analysing some aspects of wellbeing

and unpaid work. There is a clear user demand for time-use data as well as a need for their harmonization;

(b) The Secretariat's collection of methodological material on time-use surveys was appreciated. OECD offered to share the information they have collected in the context of *ex-post* harmonization of time-use surveys;

(c) Partnerships with academic institutions may provide opportunities for experimenting with modern methods of data collection on time-use;

(d) The task force on valuing unpaid household services should identify the methodological and statistical challenges for NSOs in this area, and analyse the feasibility of available approaches;

(e) The task force should also consider in its work the recommendations of non-statistical bodies, such as those of the Committee on National Statistics of the United States National Academy of Sciences.

Conclusions

24. The Bureau approved the terms of reference of the Task Force on valuing unpaid household service work.

3. Political and other community activities

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/8 by UNECE

25. The Bureau discussed possible follow-up work on political and other community activities, after an in-depth review carried out in February 2013. As requested by the Bureau, the Secretariat conducted a consultation among countries and international organizations on the way forward. The consultation revealed that very few countries are ready to participate in work on this topic. The Bureau asserted that the topic is important but difficult to measure. OECD is considering examining this topic in the context of its *How's Life* initiative.

Conclusions

26. The Bureau decided to put this work on hold until a greater degree of interest is demonstrated by countries.

4. Social protection

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/9 by UNECE, OECD, World Bank and ILO

27. The Bureau discussed possible follow-up work on social protection based on a paper prepared by UNECE, OECD, World Bank and ILO. The paper presented the outcome of the recent meeting of the Social Protection Inter-agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) who is working towards harmonization in this field. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) Social protection is covered in government finance statistics and in the *Classification of the Functions of Government* (COFOG), so some standards exist on government spending on social protection;

(b) Social Protection Statistics and Indicators Inter-Agency Working Group was formed in March 2013 in conjunction with SPIAC-B to address issues concerning standardization of definitions and classifications and harmonization of data collection.

Conclusions

28. The Bureau decided to invite a representative of the SPIAC-B to attend an upcoming Bureau meeting to present the work and planned activities of SPIAC-B concerning harmonization and international comparability of social protection statistics. The meeting would provide an opportunity to raise the issue of international comparison of social protection statistics with the SPIAC-B.

5. Entrepreneurship

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/10 by OECD, Eurostat and UNECE

29. The Bureau discussed possible follow-up work on entrepreneurship, after an in-depth review carried out in October 2013. The discussion was based on a paper by OECD, Eurostat and UNECE presenting the outcome of the recent meeting of the Eurostat/OECD Entrepreneurship Indicators Programme. The following issues were discussed:

(a) Improving timeliness of entrepreneurship statistics should be given high priority;

(b) Breakdowns of entrepreneurship indicators by age and size, and by ownership (domestic or foreign) are important but particularly difficult to achieve;

(c) The outcomes of the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) project to develop guidelines for measuring entrepreneurship from a gender perspective should be taken into account in any further work. The guidelines are expected to be finalized by 2016;

(d) Possible future work on entrepreneurship statistics should take into account the upcoming *Guidelines on Statistical Business Registers* to ensure consistency in the treatment of entrepreneurship indicators.

Conclusions

30. The Bureau endorsed the proposals for further work presented in document ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/10. The Bureau will discuss possible further work on entrepreneurship statistics in relation to business registers after finalisation of the *Guidelines on Statistical Business Registers* which will be presented to the CES plenary session for endorsement in June 2015.

6. Climate change-related statistics

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/11 by UNECE

31. The Bureau discussed possible follow-up work on climate change-related statistics after the endorsement of the *CES Recommendations on climate change-related statistics*. The proposal by the Secretariat reflects the outcome of a wide consultation among CES member countries and organisations. The following issues were discussed:

(a) The Bureau expressed strong support for the proposed way forward in climate change-related statistics;

(b) The proposed Task Force on a set of key climate change related statistics should ensure that it does not duplicate the work to be carried out under the OECD Implementation Plan for the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) and the related core tables. Close cooperation of these two streams of work will be necessary;

(c) OECD confirmed their readiness to organize a seminar on SEEA implementation jointly with UNECE. The OECD Environment Policy Committee will also be willing to contribute to the organization of this seminar;

(d) Participation of NSOs that are responsible for greenhouse gas inventory compilation would be useful in the follow-up work (currently Turkey is the only such country interested in participating in the Task Force);

(e) Mexico and Eurostat are willing to participate in the Steering Group that will provide guidance to future work on climate change related statistics. Canada, Mexico, Turkey, OECD and UNSD are interested in participating in the Task Force.

Conclusions

32. The Bureau approved the terms of reference for a Steering Group on Climate Change-related Statistics and a Task Force on a Set of Key Climate Change-related Statistics. The Task Force should ensure coordination of work with the development of the related SEEA core tables.

7. Environmental indicators

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/12 by UNECE

33. The Bureau discussed the terms of reference of the Joint UNECE Intersectoral Task Force on Environmental Indicators. The following issues were raised:

(a) The Bureau welcomed the work of the Joint Task Force and noted its importance in providing support to national statistical offices in the area of environmental statistics;

(b) The Joint Task Force could promote the use of SDMX for more effective dissemination of environmental statistics.

Conclusions

34. The Bureau approved the terms of reference for the UNECE Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators. The terms of reference will also be presented for approval to the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (28-31 October 2014). The Bureau asked the Joint Task Force to report on its work plans and progress of work at regular intervals.

8. Leading, composite and sentiment indicators

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/13 by UNECE

35. The Bureau discussed possible follow-up work on leading, composite and sentiment indicators, after an in-depth review carried out in January 2014 and a discussion at the CES plenary session in April 2014. The proposal by the Secretariat reflects the outcome of these discussions and the electronic consultation among CES members. The following issues were raised:

(a) There is strong demand for leading, composite and sentiment indicators. NSOs can produce such indicators on impartial basis by using sound and transparent methodologies;

(b) It is essential to have a clear communication strategy for such indicators to avoid misinterpretation. Interpretation guidelines for users could be developed to complement the existing compilation guidelines for producers;

(c) Exchange of good practices would help countries which are producing such indicators, even though work in this area is not a priority for all statistical offices;

(d) Composite indicators require a good theoretical framework for deciding on weights and aspects to be measured. This calls for close collaboration with academia. A possible Task Force in this area should include economists and experts in social issues in addition to statisticians;

(e) Country rankings based on composite indicators create a lot of media attention while they are highly sensitive to changes in the compilation methodology;

(f) International guidance on compiling such indicators would help to ensure a harmonized methodology. In this context, the Bureau welcomes the upcoming UNSD handbooks on tendency surveys, composite indicators and rapid estimates;

(g) Further work in this area should be in line with the Eurostat User Guide to the Joint Harmonized EU Programme of Business and Consumer Surveys published in March 2014;

(h) A possible seminar organised on this topic should not overlap with the seminars organised by Eurostat, OECD or UNSD focusing on indicators in specific subject areas.

Conclusions

36. The Bureau asked the Secretariat to organise a seminar on leading, composite and sentiment indicators to discuss the way forward which should focus on (i) the role of national statistical offices; (ii) criteria for their involvement and (iii) the communication challenges related to these indicators.

9. Modernization of statistical production and services

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/14 by UNECE

37. The Bureau discussed the innovative working methods introduced in the activities overseen by the High-Level Group for the modernization of statistical production and services (HLG) and the extent to which these could be applied in other work areas of the CES. The following issues were raised:

(a) The new working methods have been very effective in the work under HLG and have resulted in good quality and timely outputs;

(b) Concentrating activities into a short period of time can be a strain on resources but may be more efficient than sporadic engagement in longer-term activities. However, organizations need to carefully consider when they can free resources for this work and there is a risk of over-engaging some experts;

(c) Aiming for outputs that are "good enough" rather than perfect was supported but it may sometimes be difficult to define what is "good enough". The acceptable level of quality may be different in different areas, and this should not be seen as an incentive to accept lower quality;

(d) The work of the HLG should be brought to the attention of the Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development;

(e) The wider applicability of new working methods will depend on the subject-matter area, for example the balance between quality and timeliness would be different for technical products and guidelines compared to legislative texts.

Conclusions

38. The Bureau showed high interest in the innovative working methods used in the activities of the HLG. These methods can be experimented in other areas of international collaboration work under CES. It would be useful to have practical guidance on how to apply the new working methods.

10. Other issues related to the Statistical Programme

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/26 by UNECE

39. The Bureau discussed future maintenance of the Database of International Statistical Activities (DISA) and the need for updating the Classification of International Statistical Activities. The following issues were discussed:

(a) The classification of statistical activities needs to be updated to include new, emerging areas of international statistical work, such as climate change related statistics, composite indicators, geo-spatial data, etc. The name of the classification should also be considered;

(b) The updating procedure of the database should be simplified, e.g. by providing a link to the statistical programmes of the international organizations on the web, or a list of statistical areas where the organizations are active.

Conclusions

40. The Bureau decided to launch the update of the Classification of International Statistical Activities and asked the Secretariat to prepare a proposal for the updating procedure for the next meeting of the Bureau.

41. The Bureau was in support of simplifying the process of DISA maintenance and asked for more information on the user demand before deciding whether there is a need for continuation of maintaining the database.

VII. Report on Gender Equality Indicators

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/15 by the Task Force

42. The Bureau considered the *Report on Indicators of Gender Equality* prepared by the Task Force on this topic. The updated version of the Report reflects the discussions at the CES 2014 plenary session and the suggestions made during the electronic consultation prior to the plenary session. The following issues were discussed:

(a) The Report will greatly improve monitoring of gender equality and capacity building in this area. The gender-centred (as opposed to women-centred) approach taken was particularly welcome, as was the section on children and adolescents;

(b) OECD provided detailed comments to the Secretariat for further updates of the indicators.

Conclusions

43. The Bureau endorsed the *Report on Indicators of Gender Equality* and thanked the Task Force for its work.

VIII. How to evaluate the impact of CES work

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/16 by UNECE

44. The Bureau was informed of the current procedures for evaluating the work carried out under CES. The Bureau considered how to evaluate the impact of CES activities in future. The following issues were discussed:

(a) Evaluations should focus on the outcome of the work, e.g. whether countries apply the CES recommendations and what is their value to countries;

(b) A thorough evaluation of the impact of CES work would be a heavy exercise. Furthermore, analyzing actual changes due to implementing the CES recommendations in countries would require time as the results cannot be seen immediately;

(c) The evaluation process should not distract resources from the subject-matter work;

(d) The Secretariat should look for new ways to promote awareness of CES and its products;

(e) Improving the evaluation of the impact of CES work can be done gradually. One step would be to ask Steering Groups to follow-up on the implementation of the CES recommendations in their area and report back to the Bureau;

(f) Criteria for success and failure of the activities should be included in the terms of reference of the Steering Groups and the Task Forces.

Conclusions

45. The Biennial Performance Reports will be discontinued as they became voluntary under the new UNECE Evaluation Policy.

46. The Bureau supported the theme "Impact of CES work on measuring sustainable development" for the next internal evaluation of the UNECE statistics subprogramme that will be carried out in 2016-17.

47. The Bureau agreed on a stepwise process to improving the evaluation of the impact of the outcomes of CES work. The terms of reference for future Steering Groups should include a task to follow up on countries' progress in implementing the CES recommendations. The secretariat will make a proposal for the success criteria for the work of Task Forces to the next CES Bureau meeting.

IX. Follow-up to the CES 2014 plenary session

1. Evaluation of the 62nd plenary session

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/17 by UNECE

48. The results of the evaluation questionnaires of the 2014 CES plenary session were presented for information.

Conclusions

49. Evaluation of the future CES plenary sessions will be conducted through electronic questionnaires.

2. Follow-up to the CES seminar "What is the value of official statistics and how do we communicate that value?"

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/18 by UNECE

50. The Bureau discussed the follow-up actions to the CES 2014 seminar on "What is the value of official statistics and how do we communicate that value?" The following issues were discussed:

(a) The objective of any work on communicating the value of official statistics should be clearly specified;

(b) The overall aim of this work would be to achieve a recognition of the value of official statistics by stakeholders, following the adoption of the Fundamental Principles by the UN General Assembly;

(c) The challenge of communicating the value of official statistics should be approached in a professional way. The value may be interpreted differently in different countries and by various audiences. The message and means of promoting the value should therefore be also different;

(d) A common strategy, tools and marketing techniques for communicating the value of official statistics would be useful. These can include indicators to measure the value of official statistics, and a collection of case studies of calculating its economic value. In addition to economic value, official statistics also have a social value.

(e) Using an external evaluation and engaging people outside official statistics to promote its value may increase the credibility of these measures;

(f) There is a lack of comparable information on the cost of producing official statistics that could be used in the discussions on value of official statistics. Some cost estimates are available on censuses and there have been attempts to measure the cost of producing national accounts by OECD. However, this work is challenging. Work on methods for calculating the cost of producing official statistics could be launched under the Conference;

(g) Opinions differed concerning the right forum to discuss the value of official statistics and its communication. Some participants found that this work falls outside HLG. Others considered the HLG Modernization Committee on Products and Sources to be well placed to address this issue. Some participants recommended that this topic also be discussed at future CES work sessions on statistical communication;

(h) United Kingdom is ready to take a lead in working on communicating the value of official statistics. Canada and Mexico expressed interest in participating in the work.

Conclusions

51. United Kingdom, in collaboration with Canada, Mexico and the Secretariat, will draft a road map exploring the key aspects to be covered in further work on communicating the value of official statistics. The proposal will be submitted to the Bureau for consideration at its next meeting.

3. Follow-up to the CES seminar on migration statistics

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/19 by UNECE

52. The Bureau discussed follow-up actions to the CES 2014 seminar on migration statistics and reviewed the terms of reference for a Steering Group on migration statistics. The following issues were raised:

(a) The UNECE work session on migration statistics in the Republic of Moldova in September 2014 advocated for the use of "mirror statistics" to improve quality of migration data. A reference to "mirror statistics" should be added to the terms of reference of the Steering Group;

(b) Cooperation between countries on data exchange is a key challenge in improving migration statistics;

(c) Political support is needed for the use of "mirror statistics" and data exchange;

(d) Measurement of irregular migration, refugees and displaced persons is an important issue to be considered for further work;

(e) The need for documenting success stories and pilot projects in this area was highlighted;

(f) The terms of reference of the Steering Group should be more specific.

Conclusions

53. The Bureau approved the terms of reference for the Steering Group on migration statistics, subject to including the following points: (i) promotion of collaboration between government agencies, (ii) promotion of the use of "mirror statistics", (iii) importance of the measurement of refugees and displaced persons, and (iv) regular reporting by the Steering Group to the Bureau on emerging issues and possible ways of addressing them.

X. Preparation for the CES 2015 plenary session

1. Organization of the CES 2015 seminar on the response of official statistics to Sustainable Development Goals

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/20 by Switzerland

54. The Bureau discussed the organization of the CES 2015 seminar on the response of official statistics to Sustainable Development Goals based on an outline prepared by the seminar organizer. The following issues were raised:

(a) It is important to identify the expected outcome of the seminar;

(b) It is desirable to have a keynote speaker from policy level, preferably a person involved in the SDG process (e.g. Amina Mohammed);

(c) The seminar should discuss coordination of monitoring SDGs at regional level, building on the outcome of the UNECE session which will take place in April 2015. There have been proposals to select a sub-set of about 100 indicators relevant for the region. A possible mechanism of peer reviews is being considered;

(d) The role of statistical offices in measuring achievement of SDGs will be crucial. The seminar should be an opportunity to clarify the expectations to statistical systems with regard to SDGs, and stress the leading role of NSOs in data collection, accreditation and methodology. The discussion should also deal with disseminating the data on SDGs, including those produced outside the statistical system;

(e) The indicators for the post-2015 development agenda will present a huge challenge to NSOs. All these indicators cannot be produced with the traditional statistical processes, therefore alternative methods are needed. If NSOs cannot respond to the challenge, this may put the future of the statistical community at risk;

(f) The seminar should discuss how to implement the recommendations of the Independent Advisory Expert Group (IEAG) on data revolution. It will be important to have the statisticians who were members of IEAG participating in the CES seminar;

(g) Countries at different levels of statistical development should participate in the seminar to present their views;

(h) Capacity building is essential as there are capacity gaps in even the most advanced countries. The question is how to finance this work;

(i) Cooperation among IOs is an important issue to be discussed;

(j) The work of the Friends of the Chair Group on broader measures of progress should be taken into account. The Group has made an analysis of data availability for the proposed targets and indicators;

(k) Representatives of different stakeholders should be invited to the seminar: policy people, non-official data producers, etc.

Conclusions

55. The seminar will take place on Monday, 15 June 2015. The seminar organisers will proceed with the preparations, taking into account the recommendations by the Bureau.

2. Organisation of the CES 2015 seminar on modernization of statistical production and services and managing for efficiency

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/21 by Ireland and Italy

56. The Bureau discussed the organization of the CES 2015 seminar on modernization of statistical production and services and managing for efficiency based on an outline prepared by the seminar organizers. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) Summaries of contributions should be subject-driven, rather than a series of descriptions of country experiences;

(b) The use of interactive tools was supported, but there was concern that inviting comments and questions from remote participants could take up too much time;

(c) It could be useful to have input from private sector data producers in the second session.

Conclusions

57. The seminar will take place on Tuesday, 16 June 2015. The seminar organisers will proceed with the preparations, taking into account the recommendations by the Bureau.

3. Report on measuring quality of employment to be submitted to CES in 2015

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/22 by the Expert Group

58. The Bureau considered the draft *Statistical Framework for Measuring Quality of Employment* prepared by an Expert Group chaired by Germany. The following issues were discussed:

(a) The Bureau supported the work of the Expert Group. The Framework is very useful as there is high policy interest in this area;

(b) The Framework should be considered a statistical toolbox that can be used by countries in compiling quality of employment indicators. The Framework is flexible allowing indicators to be compiled according to data availability and national needs and conditions. All countries are not requested to compile all indicators.

Conclusions

59. The Secretariat will circulate the *Statistical Framework for Measuring Quality of Employment* to all CES members for electronic consultation in view of presenting it to the CES 2015 plenary session for endorsement.

4. Report on business registers to be submitted to CES in 2015

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/23 by the Task Force;
ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/25 by UNECE in consultation with Austria, OECD, Eurostat and UNECE

60. The Bureau considered the progress of work in finalising the *International Guidelines on Statistical Business Registers*. The Bureau also discussed the mandate and role of the Wiesbaden Group in relation to other groups working on business registers. The following issues were discussed:

(a) The Bureau supported the work of the Task Force. The Bureau recommended to include in the Guidelines some text on how new data sources, including Big Data, can help in maintaining statistical business registers in future;

(b) The Task Force has consulted the use of statistical units in national accounts with the Advisory Expert Group (AEG) on National Accounts to ensure consistency of concepts. The issues related to statistical units in statistical business registers should be considered also by the AEG on Classifications;

(c) The Bureau welcomed the note on the Wiesbaden Group and its relation to the work of the joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD expert group on business registers and the Task Force on guidelines for statistical business registers. The Bureau noted that the Wiesbaden Group has its mandate from the UN Statistical Commission and any further issues concerning the Group should be addressed to UNSC.

Conclusions

61. The Secretariat will submit the draft *International Guidelines on Statistical Business Registers* to the February 2015 Bureau meeting for review prior to the electronic consultation with the CES members.

62. The Bureau welcomed the proposal by UNSD to have a global consultation of the *International Guidelines on Statistical Business Registers* and to submit them to the UN Statistical Commission, after consideration by the CES.

5. Preparation of the formal session, draft agenda and timetable

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2014/OCT/24 by UNECE

Conclusions

63. The 63rd CES plenary session will take place on 15-17 (a.m.) June 2015 in Geneva. The Bureau approved the draft timetable subject to possibly shortening the timeframe of the CES seminars to ensure enough time for the discussion of the substantive outcomes of work, such as CES recommendations and outcomes of in-depth reviews.

64. The Secretariat will prepare an updated timetable of the CES 2015 plenary session for the February 2015 meeting of the Bureau.

XI. Presentation of the World Economic Forum's activities related to statistics

65. The World Economic Forum (WEF) presented its work on composite indicators and their underlying methodologies. The WEF flagship product is the Global Competitiveness Report that includes a Global Competitiveness Index. The index was launched in 1979 and its coverage has been gradually extended reaching now 144 countries. The Index is based on quantitative data from international organizations and qualitative data from an annual Executive Opinion Survey on the perceptions of 15,000 business leaders worldwide.

66. WEF releases also other composite indices, such as a Network Readiness Index, Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index, Enabling Trade Index, Europe 2020 Composite Index, Gender Gap Index and Energy Architecture Performance Index. WEF is currently developing a sustainability-adjusted Global Competitiveness Index to take into account social and environmental issues, such as inequality, youth unemployment, vulnerable employment, environmental regulation and degradation, forest loss, water use, etc.

67. The following issues were discussed:

(a) WEF indices are widely used and very important for policy makers. WEF has a well-designed website and uses innovative ways of presenting data that could serve as a good example to statistical offices;

(b) The Bureau underlined the need to be fully transparent about the underlying methods and assumptions and have a solid conceptual foundation for the composite indexes. Furthermore, official statistics should be preferred as a data source;

(c) The weights assigned to the different components of indicators significantly influence the results. Information on the exact weights used, including for the business survey part should be publicly available. The Executive Opinion Survey reflects perceptions of business leaders. These can change even when the objective conditions do not change, for example due to increased attention to related issues in public discussions and media;

(d) To ensure impartiality, WEF indices are not financed by businesses or governments, the source data are extracted from established international organizations, and the results are not sent to countries for correction before publication. WEF uses data from international organizations instead of country sources because the data are considered more comparable and presented in a standardized format.

(e) Countries sometimes challenge the results of WEF Reports, for example due to outdated data used for calculating the indices. Therefore, countries should ensure that they submit correct and up-to-date information to international organizations. It would be good to create a systematic feedback from WEF providing signals on poor data quality to its data providers.

(f) The seminar on leading, composite and sentiment indicators to be organized under CES should involve WEF and other private institutes such as the Mexican Institute for Competitiveness (IMCO) in addition to national statistical offices.

(g) The discussion prompted a question whether an index describing the quality of national official statistics in countries could be developed.

Conclusions

68. The Bureau thanked the WEF representative for the informative presentation that provoked an interesting discussion. It would be useful to discuss synergies among official statisticians, WEF and other private agencies that compile indices at the seminar on leading, composite and sentiment indicators that UNECE will organise following the Bureau decision under agenda item 5(h).

XII. Discontinuation of the FAO-CES study on food and agricultural statistics

69. The Study Group on Food and Agricultural Statistics in Europe was established in 1959 by the Conference of European Statisticians and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The last meeting of the Study Group was held in 2005 and the Group has not been active since then.

Conclusions

70. The CES Bureau decided to discontinue the FAO-CES Study Group on Food and Agricultural Statistics.

XIII. Dates and venue of the next meetings

71. The Bureau confirmed the dates for its next meetings as follows:

(a) The next Bureau meetings will take place on 17-18 February 2015 in Geneva and on 20-21 October 2015, venue to be decided;

(b) The Bureau meetings in 2016 are tentatively scheduled for the week of 8 February in Luxemburg and 18-19 October, venue to be decided.

72. The 63rd CES plenary session will take place 15-17 June 2015 in Geneva, starting at 9:30 on 15 June and finishing by 12:30 on 17 June 2015. The meeting of the OECD Statistics Committee will take place back-to-back with the CES plenary session.

73. The 64th CES plenary session is tentatively scheduled to be held on 27-29 April 2016 in Paris.

XIV. Other business

74. The Bureau decided which papers of the CES Bureau meeting will be made available on the web (http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=33225).

75. Mr. John Pullinger of the United Kingdom was co-opted as a Bureau member until the next elections of the CES Bureau in June 2015, to replace Ms. Jil Matheson, the former Chief Statistician of the United Kingdom.